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Where was 1821? Space and Territory in the Greek Revolution



Female Fatherlands

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Female Fatherlands: Women of Letters, Greek Patriotism and the 1821 Revolution

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In 1816, Aikaterini Rasti, a young woman from Wallachia, published in Vienna the *Γεωγραφικόν Παιγνιον*, Greek version of *Jeu des cartes géographiques* by Étienne de Jouy (1764–1864). It was a deck of cards designed as a teaching aid for children to learn world geography.¹ The publication has invariably appeared in the historiography of nineteenth-century Greek women's works.² However, Rasti did not self-identify as Greek. She referred to herself as an *αλλοδαπή* (foreigner), a Wallachian, and explained she had translated the work into Greek in order to pay off her debt for all the knowledge and wisdom she had gained by learning the Greek language: "my conscience drove me to labour as much as possible in order to give back a part of all the things that I borrowed as a foreigner who was taught the [Greek nation's] language" (η συνείδησής μου αυτή με ωδήγει να κοπιάσω κατά το δυνατόν διά να αποδώσω μέρος καν από όσα αλλοδαπή ούσα εδανείσθην διδαχθείσα την γλώσσα [του Γραικικού γένους]).³ The issue of her national belonging was also brought up by the unknown editor of *Ερμής ο Λόγιος* (Hermes the scholar), the longest running Greek periodical of pre-revolutionary times. In the article announcing the publication of the *Γεωγραφικόν Παιγνιον*, we are informed that Rasti "even though she was born to Greek parents, took Wallachia as her homeland" (μ' όλον ότι γεννημένη από γονείς Γραικούς εδέχθη ως πατρίδα της τη Βλαχία).⁴ The oversimplification of Rasti's nationality and her inclusion in the national historiography is most meaningful if we compare it with those who were omitted. In the same way Rasti was arbitrarily included in the corpus of Greek pre-revolutionary writers, those who lived in Italy and wrote in Italian, like Isabella Teotochi (1763–1836), Maria Petrettini (1772–1851) and Angelica Palli (1798–1875) were deemed to be irrelevant. Interestingly, this was a development of twentieth-century historiography. Women who had lived and written in Italian were included in the histories written in the nineteenth century. Most characteristically, in 1896 the Greek feminist Callirhoe Parren wrote a history of important Greek women. In it, Palli, Teotochi and Petrettini were presented as *natural* members of the Greek nation and were introduced alongside the women of Souli, Despo Tzavela and Bouboulina.⁵ With the changes in the Greek nationalist aspirations brought about by early twentieth-century events, Greekness was all the more defined in terms of language and religion, territory being an additional factor, perpetually

malleable and expanding, depending on who spoke about it. Religion on its own could not be relied on, however, for one, because it would not provide clear limits within the Balkans. Eventually, language, which, among other things, provided the claim for a clear unbroken connection with the Hellenic past, was the litmus test for what, and who could be, part of the histories concerning the times before and during the Greek Revolution. However, understanding the complexities of the early nineteenth-century world, and the meanings of patriotism and the ideological substratum of the revolution, means expanding the definitions of patriotism.

This article, then, will examine patriotic discourses as they were carried out by a few female thinkers who were connected with the Greek cause, before and during the war. It will examine how they perceived Greece and Europe as social, political, geographical and revolutionary spaces, and how they understood the gendered character of the war. Its aim is to challenge traditional localities of the Greek Revolution by including women who lived in areas that did not become part of the imaginary national geography of the Greek nation-state after its inception, and did not necessarily use the Greek language in their writings. As is often the case in a time of revolution, inspired by the possibilities of a new type of polity and convinced that enlightenment ideas would afford them inclusion, women who self-identified as Greek imagined a community where they would be allowed personhood. From Elisavet Martinengou, who lived a life of utter seclusion in her house in Zante, and Evangelia Kairi, who respected contemporary expectations by never signing her work, to Angelica Palli, “the Tyrtaeus of Greek fighters”, and Roxandra Stourdza, the confidante of the Russian tsar, many different fatherlands emerged in many different locations. At the core of these varied conceptualizations, one finds the polysemic character of patriotism. Greekness was not an exclusive quality. One could lament the fate of Greece under the Ottoman yoke and a few pages later talk about Russia with equal passion and devotion. As the geographies surrounding them were transforming, the history of these women’s patriotisms cannot be told if we do not open our gaze to a broader geographical space and if we do not take into consideration the material circumstances within which they lived and worked.

The military, political and intellectual events of the beginning of the nineteenth century were geographical in the sense that they took place in and over space; a space that was contested and continuously adjusted in the shadow of the power struggles of six empires. It follows that the people who populate this story were constantly changing and negotiating new and old cultural and political affiliations. The vast majority of the Orthodox Christians were part of the Millet-i Rum in the Ottoman Empire. The Russian Empire, the only Orthodox state in the world at the time, had been encouraging revolts in the Greek peninsula since 1770, hoping it would be able to gain access to the Aegean Sea and, ultimately, detach it from the Ottoman Empire. The Venetian Empire controlled the Ionian Islands until its collapse in 1797. France took over and occupied them for various periods

between 1797 and 1814. From 1799 to 1807 the islands were under an unusual arrangement of joint Russo–Ottoman sovereignty. In 1815, they became a British protectorate and they would remain so until 1864, when they became part of the Greek state. Last but not least, the Habsburg Empire controlled lands in the north and west of present-day Greece, and took active part in what would become the “Eastern Question”. In the early nineteenth century, Orthodox Christians with an allegiance to the Patriarchate of Constantinople lived in the realms of all these empires. Within the Ottoman Empire the Patriarchate had a lot of influence on the religious, cultural and social life of Orthodox Christians, to the point that it has been called an “empire within an empire”.⁶ The official language of all the Eastern patriarchates within the Ottoman Empire was Greek and all the representatives were native speakers of Greek. Douglas Dakin calculates that the Greek-speaking Orthodox population within the Ottoman Empire accounted for one quarter of its inhabitants by the end of the eighteenth century.⁷ However, as mentioned above, Greek-speaking populations were to be found in a vast area around Europe. An indication of this can be found in Philippos Iliou’s work on the subscribers of books written in Greek. He finds that most of these books were read in Constantinople, Vienna and Bucharest followed by Jassy, Smyrna and Mount Athos.⁸ Against this backdrop, educated women were usually members of the Phanariot aristocracy, or they belonged to middle-class families whose male members had studied in Italian or French universities. It is because of this privileged background that specific women had the ability to utilise imperial and commercial networks and had the freedom to talk about the Greek nation and its cause to different audiences that encompassed this vast geographical space.

Where was the fatherland?

In a sense, Greece was for female scholars an abstraction that could simultaneously exist in many different configurations depending on the context. Even those who were deeply invested in the Greek patriotic cause harboured a situational conception of what and where their fatherland was.⁹ One example can be found in the work of Evarthia Kairi (1799–1866), who belonged to a family of educated merchants, priests and scholars. She was a scholar herself, a translator and playwright. She was born on the island of Andros and moved to Kydonies (present-day Ayvalik) at the age of fifteen. In the beginning of the revolution, she moved to Syros (a Cycladic island that remained neutral during the war), where she remained until the end of her life. Kairi offers us a glimpse of how she understood her homeland in her correspondence.¹⁰ In a letter to her brother Theofilos, who was fighting in the Peloponnese, she wrote in July 1822: “I was happy because you can finally fulfil the debt to our common fatherland ... because you, dear brother, you taught me how much debt one has to the fatherland. You told me many times, that one should sacrifice their own life for the freedom of the fatherland and not only did I hear you say it, but you also carried this out in practice” (εχάρην δε διότι δύνασαι ἡδη να εκπληρής το προς την κοινήν ημών

πατρίδα χρέος ... διότι συ αγαπητέ αδελφέ, με εδίδαξας πόσον χρέος έχει τις προς την πατρίδα, συ με έλεγες πολλάκις, ότι πρέπει να θυσιάζη τις και την ιδίαν ζωήν του διά την ελευθερίαν της πατρίδος, και όχι μόνον σε ήκουσα να το λέγης, αλλά και σε είδον να το εκτελής εμπράκτως). Here, when talking about fatherland (*πατρίδα*), Kairi meant what was considered to be the Greek territory patriots were hoping to liberate from the Turks. In a public letter to philhellenes she wrote in April 1825, she provided a description of where that fatherland was. It encompassed the Aegean Sea: Kydonies, Chios, Crete, the Dodecanese and Evia.¹¹ These areas did not coincide with what came to be Greece, especially in the immediate postrevolutionary years, but they were surely part of an imaginary national geography. Apart from that, the meaning of the word “fatherland” was unstable and very much depended on her audience. In most cases, she used the word to refer to Andros, the island where she was born. At some point in a letter of October 1824 she even called Syros, the Cycladic island where she had gone to live with her brother’s family, as “bitter foreign land” (*κατάπικρον ξενιτείαν*).¹² Having both a local and a national affiliation is very common. As Michalis Sotiropoulos and Antonis Hadjikyriacou have put it: “Patris was conceptualised in two ways: the first, most prominent during the Ottoman period, related to immediate local affinities; the second related to the nation as a larger, abstract, and all-encompassing focus of belonging.”¹³ But in Kairi’s case, even the local affiliation proved to be situational. She considered Andros to be her beloved fatherland, but in many cases, usually when she was addressing the public in open letters, she would sign as “a woman from Kydonies”¹⁴ – possibly because she was trying to impress on her readers the importance of Anatolia as a part of Greek territory.

Another example of how abstract a conception “fatherland” could be is contained in a very different type of source, the introduction to the geographical game mentioned in the beginning. There, Rasti explained that she made changes to the original for two reasons: in order to correct “some essential mistakes” (τινά ουσιώδη αμαρτήματα) and in order to adjust the cards for the benefit of her own audience.¹⁵ Because of this, whereas Jouy’s first card was that of France, she would begin with her own homeland. She explains: “The writer, who is French, started the description of Europe with his own country. I have the right to do the same and so I changed the order” (Ο συγγραφέυς του βιβλίου ως Γάλλος ήρχισε την περιγραφήν της Ευρώπης από την πατρίδα του. Το αυτό δίκαιον έχουσα μετέβαλον τη σειρά εκείνου).¹⁶ According to her own declaration in the introduction about being a Wallachian, we would expect to see Wallachia in this spot. Instead, we actually see “European Turkey” (Ευρωπαϊά Τουρκία), which, according to a piece she added to the card, comprises ten regions: Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, Old Greece and the Peloponnese, Epirus, Albania, Bosnia, Serbia and Bulgaria, Wallachia and Bogdania. This “European Turkey” is very strongly reminiscent of the political writer and revolutionary Rigas Feraios’ idea of where a Greek territory would be, as described in the title of his draft

constitution: “New Political Administration for the Inhabitants of Rumelia, Asia Minor, the Mediterranean Islands and Wallachia-Bogdania” (Νέα Πολιτική Διοίκησις των Κατοίκων της Ρούμελης, της Μικράς Ασίας, των Μεσογείων Νήσων και της Βλαχομπογδανίας) and as depicted in his *Charta [Map] of Greece*.¹⁷ Neither Feraios nor Rasti actually have in mind an unadulterated Greek state. They promote the idea of a political community that would be based on what was perceived as a Greco-Christian “civilisation”, that stands for human rights and liberty, but is open to many cultures and many religions. In Feraios’ work this is stated clearly; for Rasti we have some strong indications that can also be found in her description of Europe, discussed in the next section of this article.

Still examining Rasti’s idea of what her fatherland was, we must take into account the next four cards, which do not exist in Jouy’s original game, that are dedicated to Wallachia. Even though it was not an independent state or country, Wallachia is the only one that takes up four cards, both in the original and in the Greek version, clearly being assigned great significance. Is Wallachia considered as a province or as a sovereign state-to-be? This is left unexplained, but it provides another indication of how complex and multilayered belonging and affiliations appear to be when we try to understand them through the lens of contemporary ideas. Another interesting and telling choice Rasti made was to regroup the Russian card. In the original it appeared as the last European country between Prussia and Turkey, whereas in the translation it comes right after Wallachia and before Sweden. That is, it is presented as the organic part of an *Oriental Europe* comprising *European Turkey* and *Wallachia*, a vast borderland between the *East* and the *West* that encompassed Orthodox Christianity. These choices allow us to understand Rasti’s case not simply as that of an erudite, who chose to use Greek as a scholarly language, but as a person with complex affiliations to many different fatherlands.

The fatherland as a part of Europe

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the uncertainty of the border between Europe and Asia, that sometimes was located along the Don, Volga or Urals, strengthened the “construction of Eastern Europe as a paradox of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion, Europe but not Europe”.¹⁸ It defined Western Europe in the same way the *Orient* defines the *West*. But it was also set to mediate between Europe and the Orient, or to protect Europe from oriental barbarism, depending on the financial and political circumstances. Thus, conceptions of what the political and social space of Greece were also related to ideas about the European space. In this sense, the fatherland was being defined against two alterities, that of a barbaric Islamic world and that of an enlightened Christian but at times corrupt West. Many Greek thinkers professed a dependence on European morality and ideas, seeing them as a liberating force. But at the same time, they believed the new reborn Greece to be an opportunity for Europe to connect with its roots and become the best version of itself.

Against this backdrop, in the introduction to the geographical game, Rasti mentioned the unfounded hostility some Europeans showed towards the Greek nation and expressed the desire to change this attitude with her publication. The Greek nation had helped westerners to access knowledge, it was rightfully a part of Europe, and it should be treated as such. Accordingly, she made changes to the card of Europe to make it coincide with her own conceptions about geographical and political space. Rasti and Jouy agreed that Europe is the best continent (“η πρώτη κατά την τάξην”) because of its climate and the industriousness of its inhabitants.¹⁹ But they disagreed on where its eastern border lay. For Jouy, it was the Black and Azov seas, which made the status of the southern Balkans a bit unclear. For Rasti, on the other hand, the border was the Aegean Sea and what she called “Old Greece” was unequivocally a part of Europe.²⁰

Another important distinction is that Rasti encompassed an idea of a multinational and multireligious Europe. In Jouy's text Europe comprises the following countries: “La France, l'Angleterre, l'Allemagne, l'Espagne, l'Italie, la Prusse, la Russie, la Turquie d'Europe, la Suède, le Danemark, la Hollande, le Portugal et la Suisse”. Rasti conceptualised this differently. In terms of regions and empires. “Europe includes three Empires: Austria, Russia, and Turkey, thirteen kingdoms: Swedish, Danish, Prussian, Saxon, Bavarian [sic], Wittenbergian, Dutch, Sardinian, Neapolitan, Gallic, English, Spanish, and Portuguese, four sub-kingdoms: the Polish, Bohemian, Hungarian, and Lombardian, and one Aristocracy: Switzerland” (Η Ευρώπη περιέχει τρις [sic] Αυτοκρατορίας, την Αυστρίαν, Ρωσίαν και Τουρκίαν, Δεκατρία βασίλεια, το Σβεκικόν, Δανικόν, Προυσιακόν, Σαξωνικόν, Παυαρικόν, Βυρτεμβέργιον, Ολλανδικόν, Σαρδινικόν, Νεαπολιτανόν, Γαλλικόν, Αγγλικόν, Ισπανικόν και Πορτουγαλλικόν. Τέσσαρα υποβασίλεια, το Πολωνικόν, Βοεμικόν, Ουγγρικόν και Λομβαρδικόν και μίαν Αριστοκρατίαν, την Ελβετίαν). In the same manner, where Jouy wrote that the Christian belief was the religion of Europe, Rasti wrote that there were three main religions in Europe, namely the Christian, the Ottoman and the Judaic. Rasti's experience of Europe was more pluralistic, encompassing the numerous crossings between cultures and spaces that made up the continent, whereas Jouy was influenced by a dichotomy between East and West, Christianity and Islam and civilisation and barbarism that was prominent in older ideas about the European space.

If Rasti's work can give an indication of how she understood the European geographical space, some of Kairi's work was very eloquent on conceptions of the Europeans, and of Greece's place in the continent. Apart from her many translations of French works, and the composition of a patriotic play, Kairi is also known for a series of letters to philhellenes. In April 1825, she wrote the first one, an open letter to female philhellenes that was published on the island of Hydra.²¹ The text was later translated by George Lee, the secretary of Andreas Louriotis (1789–1854), a member of the Greek

delegate committee in London since 1822.²² It was also read and circulated among the Greeks who, in many instances, felt it was an accurate representation of their plight and their expectations from Christian Europe.²³ Though written in a difficult moment of the war and at a time when appeals to Europeans on behalf of Greece were rather common, the letter did not adopt a pleading tone, but rather attacked the shameful neglect many Europeans had shown towards the Greek cause.²⁴

Kairi presented Europe as a moral space composed by the confluence of Christian and enlightenment values. Greece, also a Christian space and the rightful heir to enlightenment ideas, belonged with those who “were born in wise Europe, were educated by wise teachers, read many awe inspiring moral works … and are pupils of the Gospel” (εγεννήθησαν εις την σοφήν Ευρώπην, ότι επαιδεύθησαν από σοφούς διδασκάλους, ότι ανέγνωσαν πολλά άξια θαυμασμού ηθικά βιβλία … ότι είναι μαθητάι του Ευαγγελίου).²⁵ But instead there were those who rejoiced in watching the spectacle of a small nation being devoured by its enemies: “Who among our people, but also who among the Turks themselves, has ever hoped to see more than one hundred million Christians indifferently watching, as if they were in a Roman amphitheatre, all the Turkish nations in accord lunging against a few Christians in order to eliminate them?” (Τις όμως, δεν λέγομεν από τους ομογενείς μας, αλλά και από αυτούς τους ίδιους τους Τούρκους ήλπιζε να ιδή ποτέ υπέρ τα εκατόν εκατομμύρια χριστιανών, να βλέπωσι με ανήκουστον αδιαφορίαν, ως εις ρωμαϊκόν αμφιθέατρον, όλα τα Τουρκικά έθνη σύμφωνα και σύμμαχα να ορμώσιν εναντίον ολίγων χριστιανών διά να τους εξαλείψωσι;).²⁶ Inexplicably, the Europeans behaved as if “the Turks are their relatives, their friends, they share the same faith, they are the only nation that should reign upon the earth” (Οι Τούρκοι είναι συγγενείς των, είναι φίλοι των, είναι ομόπιστοι των, είναι το μόνο έθνος το οποίον πρέπει να βασιλεύει επί της γης).²⁷ Apart from issues of morality for those who showed support for the Muslims, Kairi highlighted what seemed to her to be a very real territorial danger, alluding to the numerical superiority of the Muslims and the ambiguous position of Oriental Europe: “let them reflect on the fact that there are more [Muslims] in Asia and in Africa than there are Christians in the entire world” (ας συλλογισθώσιν ότι περισσότεροι [Μουσουλμάνοι] ευρίσκονται εις την Ασίαν και εις την Αφρικήν παρ’ ότι είναι όλοι οι Χριστιανοί εις όλον τον κόσμον).²⁸ The Greek Christian Orthodox populations inhabited an extended borderland that insulated Europe from its natural enemies. Those who united under the Koran were numerous and capable of taking over all the Christian lands. It was in Europe’s best interest to support Greece.

Rasti emphasised the plurality of Europe in order to argue for Greece’s unconditional inclusion. Kairi, on the other hand, tried to impress the uniformity of European civilisation based on two ideological pillars: Christianity and enlightenment philosophy. Taking this a step further, Roxandra Stourdza (1786–1844), a woman of Phanariot descent who had ended up as a lady of honour in the tsarina’s court, pursued a redefinition of Greek literature that would reinvent tradition and situate the Christian Orthodox populations in a more prominent position, “among the more civilised nations”. A dedicated patriot though

she was, Stourdza did not always identify as Greek. Political and personal events would drive her to express allegiance to different fatherlands with equally strong sentiment. Historiography so far has viewed her either as a philhellene, a Phanariot or a Greek, sometimes regarding them as mutually exclusive categories. It is true that she carefully chose how to self-identify depending on the context of her actions. She had fervent patriotic feelings for both Greece and Russia that are eloquently recorded in her *Mémoires*.²⁹ When describing the defeat of the French by the army of her Russian fatherland, she says: "It would have been impossible for me to endure such a deep emotion any longer if the tears had not calmed it. I felt on this occasion that no other feeling can shake a soul more vividly than that of noble patriotism" (Il m'aurait été impossible de supporter plus longtemps une émotion aussi profonde, si des larmes ne l'avaient calmée. J'eprouvai dans cette occasion que nul sentiment n'ébranle l'âme plus vivement que celui d'un noble patriotism).³⁰ But the outbreak of the Greek Revolution found all of her "affections turned towards oppressed Greece" and became a champion and a fighter for it.

Born, raised and married within Russian diplomatic circles, Stourdza utilised her connections in order to raise money and promote the Greek revolutionary goals. In the manner of Kairi and her letters to philhellenes, she saw and presented Greece in her correspondence with foreigners as de facto and de jure belonging to a European world in terms of religious morality and law. Instead of Kairi's general appeal to philhellenic societies, she could afford a more sophisticated and extensive correspondence network that she and her brother maintained for the course of half a century (from 1805 to 1854). This network encompassed influential scholars, merchants bankers and politicians from all around Europe.³¹ In 1821, the siblings sent more than 340 letters seeking support and help on behalf of the Greek revolutionaries. Stourdza also used other means to promote her patriotic agenda. In 1825, she translated from Greek works by Constantinos Oikonomos (1780–1857), the Greek scholar and cleric. Oikonomos had eulogised in Odessa the executed patriarch, Gregorios. Stourdza translated his speech into Russian, French and German. She then diligently promoted it in the European courts. In a letter he sent her on 8 January 1823, Oikonomos wrote: "I owe you a big favour because by shaping and embellishing my inelegant speech with the illustrious language of your pen, you made it well known to the biggest part of Europe" (εις τούτον σας χρεωστώ εγώ χάριν πολλήν, διότι μορφώσασα μάλλον και καλλύνασσα την ἀκομψον ομιλίαν με την γλαφυρότητα του καλάμου σας, την εκάματε γνωστήν εις το πλείστον μέρος της Ευρώπης). An even more specific purpose of this translation is provided by Stourdza herself in the preface. "We believed that by making it known to Europe, with this translation, we would excite a general interest, not only in the moral and religious aspect, but also at the production of a language barely formed ... in order to be placed next to the most cultivated European languages" (Nous avons cru en le faisant connoître à l'Europe dans cette traduction, qu'il exciteroit un intérêt

général, non seulement sous le rapport moral et religieux, mais aussi comme production d'une langue à peine formée ... pour se placer à côté des langues européennes les plus cultivées).³² Stourdza shared with many scholars the realisation that the construction of a Greek nation should go hand in hand with the construction of a modern Greek language and literature. The need to reform spoken Greek in order to make it into a “worthy” written national language was central in the political debates of the time. Scholars that had to that point occupied themselves with describing and explaining the workings of the Greek language engaged in a big controversy on how it should be reformed that lasted until well into the twentieth century.³³ Stourdza’s effort to define this language, but also make it a part of the European heritage, is an eloquent example of how she understood a designation of Greekness only within the compass of the European world.

Fighting in the war

This was not only a time of redefinitions and reinventions for religious and national identifications. It was also a time of war. Although there are informal accounts of many women who participated in the Greek War of Independence, Eleni Varika suggests that most of them did so under the strict control of their family’s male members.³⁴ In the end, women very rarely received any compensation or recognition from the postwar Greek state. However, even if participation in the war did not conclude with equal citizenship status, it was a transformative experience. Female scholars, who belonged to the middle and higher classes, described these experiences and the liberating effect they had in different ways, depending on their proximity to the war events, but also on their own ideological ties.

Perhaps the most well-known Greek female scholar of that period, Elisavet Moutzan-Martinengou, provides in her autobiography a description of how she received the news of the revolution, and her ruminations on the significance of the war for women.³⁵ Mediated by her son who published it 50 years after her death and omitted passages he thought “would be harmful to his mother’s and family’s reputation”, this autobiography provides us a view into a very restricted female life in the beginning of the nineteenth century, in Zante, an Ionian island that was not under Ottoman rule and was not in revolt. Moutzan-Martinengou’s text was bilingual. She included letters she had sent to her uncle and father in Italian, along with plays that she had originally written in Italian, and their translations in an Ionian version of modern Greek. Confined as she was to her father’s house (according to her story, she was allowed to leave the house on three or four occasions as a young woman), her only access to the politics of her day was through the men who visited her father, and through her teachers. It is in one of these encounters that she found out the Greek War of Independence had begun:

At that time, on 25 March 1821, on the day of the Annunciation, my old teacher Theodosios Dimadis comes along and announces with great joy that the Greeks took

up arms against the Ottomans, that Patras and the villages around it had already shed the yoke of slavery and that maybe other places had done the same, but the news had not reached Zante yet. When I heard his words, I felt my blood warm up and longed with all my heart to take up arms, I longed with all my heart to help the people that (apparently) were fighting for their religion, their country and the desirable freedom, which, if you use it in a right way, brings about immortality, glory and happiness. I said that I longed this with all my heart, but then I looked around the walls of the house that kept me locked up, I looked at the long gowns of female slavery and I remembered I was a woman, a woman of Zante, and I sighed, but I also pleaded the Heavens to help them win, and then poor me would be able at last to see the freedom come back in Hellas and with it, on their thrones, the Muses that the Turkish tyranny had scared away for such a long time" (Εις τούτον τον καιρόν, δηλαδή τη 25 Μαρτίου 1821 την ημέραν του Ευαγγελισμού, έρχεται ο ποτέ διδάσκαλός μου Θεοδόσιος Δημάδης και μας κάμνει γνωστόν με πολλήν του χαράν, πως οι Γραικοί ανήγειραν τα όπλα εναντίον των Οθωμανών, πως η Πάτρα και η πλησίον της χώραις ήδη είχον σείσει τον ζυγόν της σκλαβίας, και πως η επιλοιπταίς χώραις, κατά την συμφωνίαν ίσως, είχαν τότε καμωμένον το ίδιον, αλλά ως πλέον μακράν, ακόμη η είδησις δεν ήτον φθασμένη εις την Ζάκυνθον. Ούτως είπεν ο μαύρος, διότι τέτοια ήτον η φήμη οπού παρευθύς έτρεξεν. Εγώ εις τα λόγια του άκουσα το αίμα μου να ζεσταίνη, επεθύμησα από καρδίας να ήθελεν ημπορώ να ζωστώ άρματα, επεθύμησα από καρδίας να ήθελε ημπορώ να τρέξω διά να δώσω βοήθειαν εις ανθρώπους, οπού δ' άλλο (καθώς εφαίνετο) δεν επολεμούσαν, παρά διά θρησκείαν και διά πατρίδα, και διά εκείνην την ποθητήν ελευθερίαν, η οποία καλώς μεταχειρίζομενη, συνηθά να προξενή την αθανασίαν, την δόξαν, την ευτυχίαν των λαών. Επεθύμησα, είπα, από καρδίας, αλλά εκύτταξα τους τοίχους του 'σπητιού οπού με εκρατούσαν κλεισμένην, εκύτταξα τα μακρά φορέματα της γυναικείας σκλαβίας και ενθυμήθηκα πως είμαι γυναίκα, και περιπλέον γυναίκα Ζακυνθία και αναστέναξα, αλλά δεν έλειψα όμως από το να παρακαλέσω τον Ουρανόν διά να ήθελε τους βοηθήση να νικήσουν, και τοιούτης λογής να αξιωθώ και εγώ η ταλαίπωρος να ίδω εις την Ελλάδα επιστρεμένην την ελευθερίαν και μαζύ με αυτήν επιστρεμένας εις τας καθέδρας τους τας σεμνάς Μούσας, από τας οποίας η τυραννία των Τούρκων τόσον και τόσον καιρόν τας εκρατούσε διωγμένας).³⁶

Moutzan-Martinengou's story was that of a terrible longing for personal freedom. As such, important contemporary events like the news about the Greek Revolution only faintly rippled through her narrative and were used as devices that promoted the story of her own subordination.³⁷ The revolution signified for her an attempt at religious, national and collective freedom whose importance she recognised. But she saw little use for a freedom that could not guarantee women's emancipation.

In contrast to her tepid interest in the revolution, other women were touched by it in a more profound way, which led them to write and publish works that would be used in order to promote the Greek cause. Angelica Palli (1798–1875), the daughter of Greeks from Epirus, who was born and raised in Livorno and was a very active philhellene, published in 1827 *Alessio, ossia, gli ultimi giorni di Psara*.³⁸ Although Palli described herself as Greek in numerous instances of her work and correspondence, she has usually been treated along

with all the other Greeks who lived in Italy as a footnote in the historiography of Greek women in the nineteenth century. She was a very prolific writer and translator, a member of Giovan Pietro Vieusseux's circle and the only female member of the Labronica academy in Livorno. *Alessio* was the first historical romance to be written in Italian and, even though it was about the Greek Revolution, it would become the first in a series of novels and novellas labelled as *romanzo storico risorgimentale*, a genre of literature revolving around the Italian Risorgimento, that flourished in early nineteenth-century Tuscany. In this sense, *Alessio* was an instance of the type of *transnational patriotism* that was very common in Greco-Italians like Palli,³⁹ a patriotism that involved a trans-Balkan and trans-Adriatic revolutionary space.

The publication of the work was financed by Palli herself and the profits were used for "the relief of enslaved Greeks" (a sollievo delle calamità dei Greci in schiavitù).⁴⁰ The setting was the island of Psara on the eve of its destruction by the Ottoman fleet, and the novel narrated the love affairs of a young Greek patriot, Alessio. Returning from a successful military mission to his native island of Psara, he brings with him as a prisoner, Amina, the beautiful wife of a Muslim official. As the days go by, he realises he has fallen in love with her, even though he is engaged to his Christian compatriot, Evantia. Torn between passion and duty, like many heroes of romantic novels, he decides to send Amina back to her husband. But, in a tragic turn of events, the island is suddenly attacked by a fleet of Turks and Albanians, and all the characters are faced with violence. In the end, in an effort to save Alessio, Amina kills her own husband, but loses her own life as well.

The setting of Palli's novella in Psara was a significant choice. By 1827, three years after the historical events had taken place, Psara was a symbol of struggle and freedom that had transcended the barriers of Greece and had acquired meaning for many Romantic nationalists in Europe. Palli used the novella to inform the interested Italian public about the events that took place in an almost journalistic manner. She introduced her Greek fatherland, in which she had never lived, by including details of the culture and everyday life. She defended the Greek cause with all its shortcomings: "I want to idolise your heroes, forgetting that they grew up without knowing how to curb their immoderate passions" (Io voglio idolatrare I tuoi eroi, dimenticando che crebbero senza conser freno alle smoderate passioni).⁴¹ But most important for this analysis, she depicted the gendered heroism of the Greek people. In the novella, Greek men fight, and Greek women usually show their love for their nation by committing suicide or asking to be killed, appalled by the sexual violence their capture would entail. In one instance, Alessio promises to kill his Greek fiancée if she is in danger of being captured. She thanks him wholeheartedly. When the fighting starts "the most courageous of the women also arm themselves" (le piú coraggiose tra le donne s'armano anch'esse).⁴² But this is more of a note in a long list of violent images of women being dragged around and sacrificed. On another instance, Alessio and his friend witness "two virgins" being assaulted by Albanian fighters. As the effort to rescue them proves futile, Alessio tosses them a dagger which they use to commit suicide.⁴³ The only one who shows

an irrepressible will to fight and lose her life is Amina, the Muslim captive: “Give me a weapon; if those who call themselves my brothers want to give you death, then I will give my brother’s death, in order to defend you” (dammi un’ arme; se quelli che costui chiama miei fratelli vorrano dar morte a te, anch’io per difenderti darò a miei fratelli la morte).⁴⁴ Her sacrifice, the sacrifice of a woman in love, becomes more dramatic because of her knowledge that she will not be able to meet Alessio in the other world: “she doesn’t have the luxury of seeing her lover again in a better world” (non ha la lusinga di rivedere l’amando in un mondo migliore).⁴⁵ Such is her alterity, that not even death can undo it.

In the novella, as Palli depicts the social customs and personal conditions of two religious and discursive spaces, Christianity/Greekness and Islam/Turkishness, Amina becomes a human borderland. Her body is an intermediary place where due to romantic love, the two religious worlds meet. She gains the power of the outsider and in this way transcends any obstacles her sex and culture have posed, and is able to wield arms: “the strength of her feeling rises despite her education and the habits and prejudices” (la forza del sentimento s’inalza a dispetto della educazione al di sopra degli usi e dei pregiudizj).⁴⁶ This way she is allowed freedom and control, but she is also completely destroyed. In this heroine, who has two different fatherlands just like herself, Palli discusses her own concerns about the complicated relationship between gender, patriotism and war violence.

Conclusions

The aim of this article was to partly reconstruct the flexible space within which the processes of 1821 took place. It looked at how upper- and middle-class female scholars who self-identified as Greek conceptualised Greece, its position in Europe and the Greek Revolution itself. The sources we have about Greek women and their role in the revolution are few and very understudied. This makes their texts a privileged medium for the historian to gain access to their mental worlds. We can see how varied these worlds can be. Even though the homeland/fatherland is a topic somehow addressed by all, there are significant fluctuations on how it is approached. In this sense, we see womanhood not as a stable category but, rather, as one that involves many intricate identifications, embedded in class and origin. However, it still gives insight into the many complex ways in which patriotism and nationalism, being context-specific ideas, are gendered, and allows for partial redefinitions of the ideological systems of the Age of Revolutions. By examining this intellectual production, this article hopes to have shown how women negotiated a radical political, historical and personal transformation; how they used imperial networks in the process of reconstructing cultural communities into nations and, themselves to citizens. Although for them patriotism was crucial, their national belongings and perceptions of the Greek space were very abstract. Apart from Evanthia Kairi, they all dedicated their lives and

work to a place they would never live in. Absence was a central element of their patriotism. In this, as in many other things, they were no different from male scholars of their time. Greek male scholars also had complex and variegated national affiliations; they tried to redefine geography as science and practice; they understood the need for a common language and literary tradition connected with the nation; they also discussed the importance of religion and the ways in which Europe was indebted to Greece. There was an extra layer in women's thought and writings. That of gender and its relationship with the forming nation. Was Greece to be a fatherland? A political entity that was run by men and could not afford citizenship for women? Or was it to become a homeland for everyone regardless of their gender? Unfortunately, if as the Franco-Peruvian socialist intellectual Flora Tristan put it "French women were still waiting for their 1789", Greek women, regardless of the ways in which they understood their homeland and fought for it, would have to settle with being women/others in a fatherland. They would have to wait for an inclusion in the Greek nation state long after its establishment. They would have to wait for their own 1821.

¹ Etienne de Jouy, *Χαρτοπαίγνιον Γεωγραφικόν, συγγραφέν μεν γαλλιστί υπό E. Ζουΐ, μεταφρασθέν δε εις την καθομιλουμένην των γραικών γλώσσα υπό Αικατερίνης Ραστή* [Geographical card game, written in French by E. Jouy translated in the everyday Greek language by Aikaterini Rasti] (Vienna: Typ. Schnirereios [Schnirer], 1816).

² Denissi identifies Rasti's work as the first translated by a Greek woman in modern times, Rizaki lists her in her "writing Greeks" and Xiradaki devotes to her three pages in her book about Phanariot women. Rasti also appears in articles about women's scholarly work during the years preceding the Greek Revolution, her Greekness never questioned. See Sophia Denissi, *Ανιχνεύοντας την αόρατη γραφή: Γυναίκες και γραφή στα χρόνια του Νεοελληνικού Διαφωτισμού-Ρομαντισμού* [Tracing the "invisible ink": Women and writing in the years of the modern Greek Enlightenment-Romanticism] (Athens: Nefeli, 2014), 112–13; Eirini Rizaki, *Οι "γράφουσες Ελλήνιδες": Σημειώσεις για τη γυναικεία λογοισύνη του 19ου αιώνα* [The "writing Greeks": Notes on female scholarship of the 19th century] (Athens: Katarti, 2007), 277–78; Koula Xiradaki, *Φαναριώτισσες: Η συμβολή τους στα γράμματα, στις τέχνες και στην κοινωνική πρόνοια* [Phanariot women: Their contribution to scholarship, art and social welfare] (Athens: Filippotis, 1999), 44–46; Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "The Enlightenment and Womanhood: Cultural Change and the Politics of Exclusion," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 1, no. 1 (1983): 39–61, <https://doi.org/10.1353/mgs.2010.0062>; Sophia Denissi, "The Greek Enlightenment and the Changing Cultural Status of Women," *Σύγκριση* 12 (2001): 42, <https://doi.org/10.12681/comparison.10813>.

³ Jouy, *Χαρτοπαίγνιον Γεωγραφικόν*, 2.

⁴ "Γεωγραφία" [Geography], *Ερμής ο Λόγιος* [Hermes the Scholar], 15 April 1816, 125, <http://anno.onb.ac.at/cgi-content/anno?aid=lgh&datum=18160415&seite=12&zoom=33>.

⁵ Callirhoe Parren, *Ιστορία της γυναικός: Σύγχρονοι ελληνίδες 1530–1896* [The history of woman: Modern Greeks 1530–1896] (Athens: Paraskevas Leonis, 1896); Angelika Psarra and Martha Michailidou, "Few Women Have a History": Callirhoe Parren and the Beginnings of Women's History in Greece," *Gender & History* 18, no. 2 (2006): 400–11, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0424.2006.00435.x>. For more on the importance of Greco-Italian intellectuals, see Konstantina Zanou, *Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean, 1800–1850: Stammering the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); Zanou, "Expatriate Intellectuals and National Identity: Andrea Mustoxidi in Italy, France and Switzerland (1802–1829)" (PhD diss., University of Pisa, 2007).

⁶ Peter Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece, 1766–1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 33.

⁷ Douglas Dakin, *The Greek Struggle for Independence, 1821–1833* (London: Batsford, 1973), 11–12.

⁸ Philippos Iliou, *Iστορίες του ελληνικού βιβλίου* [Histories of the Greek book] (Athens: Crete University Press, 2005), 118.

⁹ Pieter M. Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2016), 274.

¹⁰ Koula Xiradaki, *Ευανθία Καΐρη: Η πρώτη ελληνίδα της νεότερης Ελλάδας που διέδωσε τη μόρφωση (1799–1866)* [Evanthia Kairi: The first woman in modern Greece to disseminate knowledge (1799–1866)] (Athens: Kedros, 1984); Dimitrios Polemis, “Η Ευανθία στη ζωή του Θεόφιλου και την κοινωνία της Άνδρου” [Evanthia in the life of Theofilos and in the society of Andros], in *Ευανθία Καΐρη: Διακόσια χρόνια από τη γέννησή της, 1799–1999* [Evanthia Kairi: 200 years from her birth] (Andros: Kaireios Library, 2000), 13–27; Sophia Denissi, “Η Ευανθία Καΐρη και το έργο της στο πλαίσιο της γυναικείας δημιουργίας της εποχής της” [Evanthia Kairi and her work in the context of women's literature of her time], in *Ευανθία Καΐρη: Διακόσια χρόνια από τη γέννησή της, 27–43; Walter Puchner, *Γυναικεία δραματουργία στα χρόνια της Επανάστασης: Μητιώ Σακελλαρίου, Ελισάβετ Μουτζάν-Μαρτινέγκου, Ευανθία Καΐρη. Χειραφέτηση και αλληλεγγύη των γυναικών στο εθνικοδιδακτικό και επαναστατικό δράμα* [Women's dramaturgy during the revolution: Mitio Sakellariou, Elisavet Moutzan-Martinengou, Evanthia Kairi. Women's liberation and solidarity in national and revolutionary plays] (Athens: Kardamitsa, 2001).*

¹¹ Dimitrios Polemis, *Αλληλογραφία Θεόφιλου Καΐρη* [Correspondence of Theofilos Kairis], pt. 2, *Επιστολαι Ευανθίας Καΐρη (1814–1866)* [Letters by Evanthia Kairi] (Andros: Kaireios Library, 1994), 54.

¹² Ibid., 34.

¹³ Michalis Sotiropoulos and Antonis Hadjikyriacou, “*Patris, Ethnos, and Demos: Representation and Political Participation in the Greek World*,” in *Re-Imagining Democracy in the Mediterranean 1780–1860*, ed. Joanna Innes and Mark Philp (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198798163.003.0005>.

¹⁴ Polemis, *Αλληλογραφία Θεόφιλου Καΐρη*, pt. 2, 54.

¹⁵ Jouy, *Χαρτοπαίγνιον Γεωγραφικόν*, 4.

¹⁶ Ibid., 5.

¹⁷ See Rigas Velestinlis, *Τα επαναστατικά* [Revolutionary writings], ed. Dimitrios Karaberopoulos, 5th ed. (Athens: Rigas Society, 2005). The full title of the map is “Χάρτα της Ελλάδος εν ης περιέχονται αι Νήσοι αυτής και μέρος των εις την Ευρώπην και Μικράν Ασίαν πολυαρίθμων αποικιών αυτής περιοριζομένων, απ' ανατολών διά των Μύρων της Λυκίας μέχρι του Αργανθονίου όρος της Βιθυνίας, απ' άρκτου, διά του Ακ Κερμανίου, των Καρπαθίων ορών και Δουνάβεως και Σάββα των ποταμών. Από δυσμών διά του Ούννα και του Ιονίου πελάγους. Από μεσημβρίας διά του Λιβυκού. Τα πλείω με τας παλαιάς και νέας ονομασίας. Προς δε 9 επιπεδογραφίας τινών περιφήμων πόλεων και τόπων αυτής. Μία χρονολογία των βασιλέων και μεγάλων ανθρώπων Αυτής. 161 τύποι ελληνικών νομισμάτων ερανισθέντων εκ του αυτοκρατορικού ταμείου της Αυστρίας προς αμυδράν ιδέαν της αρχαιολογίας. Εν σώμα εις 12 τμήματα. Νυν πρώτον εκδοθείσα παρά του Ρήγα Βελεστινλή του Θετταλού, χάριν των Ελλήνων και Φιλελλήνων” (Map of Greece in which one finds its islands and a part of its numerous colonies in Europe and Asia Minor, limited in the east by Myra of Lycia to Mount Argathon in Bithynia, in the north by Akkerman, the Carpathian Mountains, and the Danube and Sava rivers. In the west by the Una and the Ionian Sea. In the south by the Libyan Sea. Most with old and new names. In addition, nine plates of some of its renowned cities and places. A chronology of its kings and grand people. 161 types of Greek coins gleaned from the imperial treasury of Austria, for an idea on archeology. One body in twelve pieces. Published first by Rigas Velestinlis of Thessaly for the sake of Greeks and philhellenes).

¹⁸ Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 23.

¹⁹ Jouy, *Χαρτοπαίγνιον Γεωγραφικόν*, 14.

²⁰ Rasti sets the eastern border of “Old Greece” but not the northern one. It remains unclear if what she thinks as older Greece actually encompasses Thessaly and Epirus.

²¹ The full title was: *Επιστολή Ἑλληνίδων τινῶν προς τας Φιλελληνίδας: Συντεθείσα παρά τινός των σπουδαιοτέρων Ἑλληνίδων* [A letter by some Greeks to the philhellenes: Composed by one of the most important Greek women]. The letter can be found in her published correspondence: Polemis, *Αλληλογραφία Θεόφιλου Καΐρη*, pt. 2, 54–61.

²² [Evanthia Kairi], *A Voice from Greece Contained in an Address from a Society of Greek Ladies to the Philhellenes of Their Own Sex in the Rest of Europe*, trans. George Lee (London: Hatchard, 1826). For more on Lee’s translation activities and the Greek delegation to London, see Loukia Droulia, “Η πρώτη δημοσίευση και μετάφραση των στρ. 151–158 του σολωμικού ‘Υμνου” [The first publication and translation of Solomos’ Hymn], *O Eranistis* 67 (1975): 1–6, <https://doi.org/10.12681/er.9329>.

²³ An example can be found in the letter sent to Kairi by Gregorios Roidis, who describes reading the letter aloud in the main church of Andros and bringing it up to scholars because he believed it to be of great service to the Greek *genos*. Dimitrios Polemis, *Αλληλογραφία Θεόφιλου Καΐρη* [Correspondence of Theofilos Kairis], pt. 4 *Επιστολάι προς Ευανθίαν Καΐρη* (1815–1866) [Letters to Evanthia Kairi (1815–1866)] (Andros: Kaireios Library, 1999), 21–22.

²⁴ An account of other pleas to philhellenes between 1825 and 1827 can be found in Maria Perlarentzou, “Ευανθίας Καΐρη, Επιστολή Ἑλληνίδων τινων προς τας Φιλελληνίδας. 1825. Ελλάδα–Ευρώπη: προβληματισμοί και επισημάνσεις” [Evanthia Kairi’s “Letter by some Greeks to the Philhellenes. 1825, Greece–Europe: considerations and insights”], *Parnassos* 45 (2003): 300.

²⁵ Polemis, *Αλληλογραφία Θεόφιλου Καΐρη*, pt. 2, 55.

²⁶ Ibid., 55–56.

²⁷ Ibid., 58.

²⁸ Ibid., 58–59.

²⁹ Roxandra Stourdza Edling, *Mémoires de la comtesse Edling (née Stourdza), demoiselle d'honneur de Sa Majesté l'impératrice* (Moscow: Imprimerie du St. Synode, 1888), <http://archive.org/details/mmoiresdelacomt00edligoog>.

³⁰ Ibid., 88.

³¹ For a quantitative and qualitative analysis of this epistolary network, see Stella Ghervas, “Le réseau épistolaire d’Alexandre et Roxandre Stourdza: Une médiation triangulaire entre Occident, Russie et Sud-Est européen,” *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 51, no. 1–4 (2013): 291–320.

³² Konstantinos Papoulidis, *Τρία ανέκδοτα γράμματα του Κωνσταντίνου Οικονόμου του εξ Οικονόμων στη Ρωξάνδρα και στον Αλέξανδρο Στούρτζα* [Three anecdotal letters from Constantinos Oikonomos to Roxandra and Alexandros Stourdzas] (Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Foundation for Patristic Texts, 1979), 462.

³³ There are many works on the subject of the language question. For a recent one, see Gunnar Hering, *H διαμάχη για τη γραπτή νεοελληνική γλώσσα* [The controversy over the written modern Greek language] (Iraklio: Crete University Press, 2020).

³⁴ Margaret Poulos, *Arms and the Woman: Just Warriors and Greek Feminist Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008); Eleni Varikas, “Women’s Participation in the Greek Revolution, 1800–1827,” in *Political and Historical Encyclopedia of Women*, ed. Christine Fauré (New York: Routledge, 2003), 235–52.

³⁵ Vangelis Athanassopoulos, ed., *Αυτοβιογραφία* [Autobiography] (Athens: Okeanida, 1997); Elizabeth Moutzan-Martinengou, *Η μήτηρ μου: Αυτοβιογραφία της κυρίας Ελισάβετ Μουτζάν-Μαρτινέγκου. Εκδιδομένη υπό του υιού αυτής Ελισαβετίου Μαρτινέγκου μετά διαφόρων αυτού ποιήσεων* [My mother: An autobiography of Mrs Moutzan-Martinengou. Published by her son Elisavetios Martinengos with some of his poems] (Athens: Korinni, 1881); Puchner, *Γυναικεία δραματουργία στα χρόνια της Επανάστασης*.

³⁶ Athanassopoulos, *Αυτοβιογραφία*, 124.

³⁷ Dimitris Arvanitakis, “Η ‘Αυτοβιογραφία’ της Μαρτινέγκου: Οι ρωγμές της σιωπής και οι πολλαπλές διαστάσεις του κόσμου” [The “autobiography” of Elisavet Martinengou: cracks in the silence and the multiple dimensions of the world], *Ta Istorika* 22, no. 43 (2005).

³⁸ Angelica Palli, *Alessio, ossia, gli ultimi giorni di Psara, Romanzo Istorico di Angelica Palli* (Livorno: s.n., 1827).

³⁹ Zanou, *Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean*.

⁴⁰ Angelica Palli Bartolommei, *Alessio, ossia, gli ultimi giorni di Psara*, ed. Giancarlo Bertoncini (Vallelaghi: Aurora, 2016), 30.

⁴¹ Ibid., 64.

⁴² Ibid., 111.

⁴³ Ibid., 117.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 108.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 110.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 101.